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DreamVision Bee takes projector design to new heights

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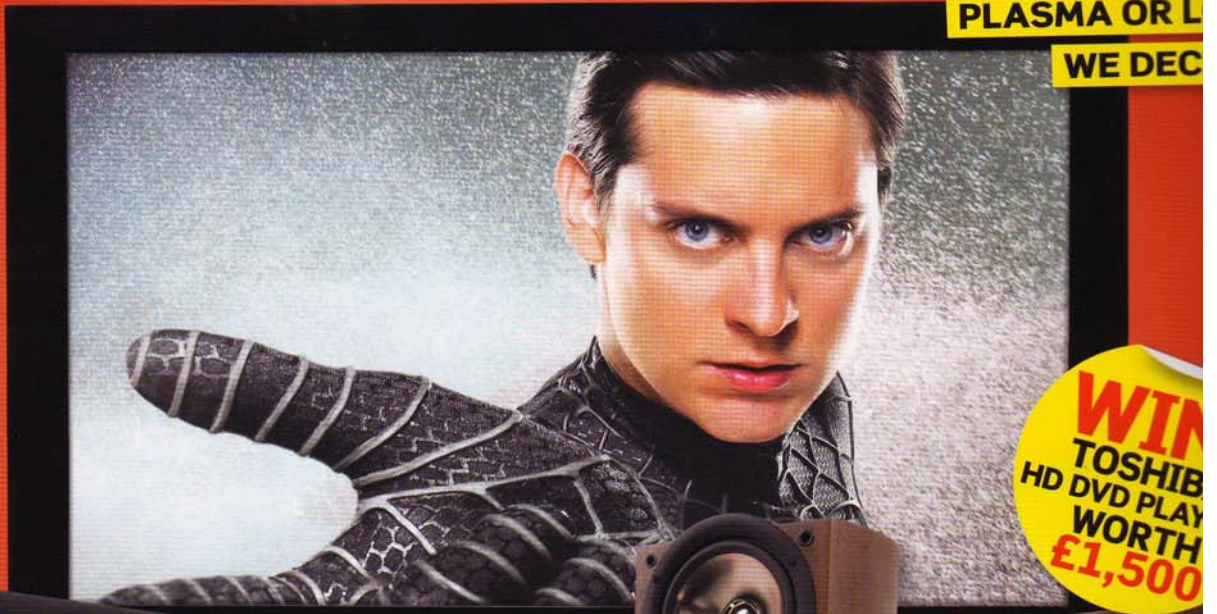
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Dare to dream a little Dream

Alvin Gold takes looks under the lid of DreamVision's style-centric Dream Bee Full HD projector - and discovers a three-chip D-ILA movie monster with performance on its mind

LAB REPORT

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Colour	✓			
Black Level	✓			
Contrast	✓			
Resolution	✓			

HCC PRACTICAL TIP

The aesthetic design of the Dream Bee, attributed to celebrated industrial designer Pinault Le Porcher, has the curvy elegance of the best of breed. The model comes in a variety of colours, including Blue Sky, Sunflower, Hibiscus and Coconut

Tried&Tested... Full HD Projector

When this projector first surfaced at the Consumer Electronics Show we were predictably wowed by its futuristic design. But I'm never one to judge a book by its cover: funky aesthetics aside, does DreamVision's Dream Bee have what it

takes to stand apart in the increasingly crowded Full HD projector market?

The limited demonstration (in a hotel suite on the Strip!) created the impression of a very good contrast ratio, a respectable black level and nifty management of motion artifacts. Now I have the Dream Bee snugly installed in my cinema room, and the good impressions are magnified.

Capable of outputting 1080p HD images, DreamVision's projector will cope with any of the top-line HD DVD or Blu-ray players, and set-top boxes like Sky HD.

I ended up using it to run through the Sky HD test card/HD setup feature, in 1080i, which features Myleene Klass in the role of presenter.

Now, as a classical pianist and ex-Hear'Say member, Myleene has little to contribute to the art of high-def calibration, but at least she does an entertaining job presenting what must surely be the most dumbed-down script ever to accompany a system setup video. And, to be fair, the material did quickly underline the Dream Bee's impressive performance abilities.

The Dream Bee is an interesting design on several counts. First and foremost it is an HD projector which works all the way from 480i to full progressive 1080p, so it has plenty of stretch to accommodate emerging hardware standards over the next few years (1080p from satellite, anyone?).

But this is not a DLP projector. It uses D-ILA reflective LCD technology, originally developed by Hughes and subsequently taken under the wing of JVC. It's a three-chip model, too, meaning the output of three 1920 x 1080 pixel panels is mixed together optically to generate a full colour output.

The beauty of D-ILA, in place of the more usual DLP in this application, is that the projection system is much simpler to engineer than an equivalent three-chip DLP, and no colour wheel is required to mix



Tried&Tested... Full HD Projector



the primary colours as on a single-chip DLP. Rainbow artifacts of the kind associated with DLP colour wheels are therefore absent. In addition, the three-dimensional structure of the LCD chip means that the connections to each pixel are hidden from view behind the reflective substrate, so the pixels butt against each other, and there is no visible grid structure. Costs are lower too. So, in short, what you have here is a three-chip D-ILA PJ with broadly the performance of a three-chip DLP PJ, or better, all at the price of a good single-chipper. Very tasty.

Lies, damn lies

Two specific claims are made for this model which don't fully stand up on test. First is

that the Dream Bee is somewhat bulkier and heavier than the maker implies. Secondly, the claim for low noise operation (22db) has a caveat. While it isn't particularly loud, the noise that it makes is more characterful and perhaps more intrusive than its rivals. Placement of the unit is therefore a careful consideration.

I had the odd finger problem with the unit control system too – the button matrix appears to have been arranged counterintuitively. With a bit of practice, though, this should cease to be an issue.

Thankfully, the remote control provides an excellent workaround, and adds direct access to many key features. The range of controls and options is wide enough to

satisfy almost anyone, and the unit comes with five presets for colour and other settings, two of which are user adjustable.

If you really need more comprehensive controls (colour, for example) or you need fuller interconnection possibilities, there is another version of the Dream Bee, the Pro. This comes with an external scaler offering four HDMI inputs and an extra component input, plus more video outputs (including HDMI) and superior image processing capabilities. It's similar in principle to the DigiOptix processor that comes with SIM2's C3X Link, and will set you back £2,500.

Connections here are still adequate, including two HDMI HDCP v1.2 inputs, component video and a bidirectional RS-232 for home automation and firmware upgrades.

Genumu power

Powering the Dream Bee is a range of digital image processing algorithms,

including VXP video processing, a 10bit internal video scaler, TruMotionHD de-interlacing, FineEdge processing and FidelityEngine noise reduction and image enhancements. Much of this – though not all – is from the upmarket Genumu stable. The result is a clean set of video parameters.

Colour reproduction is subtle in indoor and outdoor scenes, and skin tones are expressive and have the right degree of complexity and depth. Results are excellent with fixed and moving images alike. 1080i source material, from HD DVD and Sky[®] for this test, is handled particularly well.

Conclusion

Using the light engine from JVC's award-winning HD-1, the Dream Bee was always going to be good. Add superior aesthetics and a filmic character to rival the best three-chip DLP designs, and you've got a peach of a PJ ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ITEM	SUPPORT	DETAILS
HD Ready	○	1080p, too
Progressive Scan	○	All resolutions up to 1080p/24/50/60
Composite	○	1 input
S-video	○	1 input
Component Video	○	1 input
HDMI/DVI	○	2 x v1.2 HDCPO encrypted
PC input	×	Not for gamers

Resolution: 1920 x 1080
Brightness: 1000 ANSI Lumens;
Contrast: 20000:1 (claimed)

Dimensions: 585(w) x 205(h) x 470(d); Weight: 11kg

Also featuring

D-ILA three-chip video engine; claimed 2000hr lamp life (high brightness mode); RS-232C serial port for home automation; 16.7million displayable colours; GF9351 video processor featuring VXPTM technologies



Reasonable connections, but no 12V trigger for screen control

RATINGS

Highs: Excellent contrast; brilliant detail up to 1080i/p; design
Lows: Big; a tad noisy; no 12V trigger or PC input

Brightness	★★★★★
Clarity	★★★★★
Features	★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★½